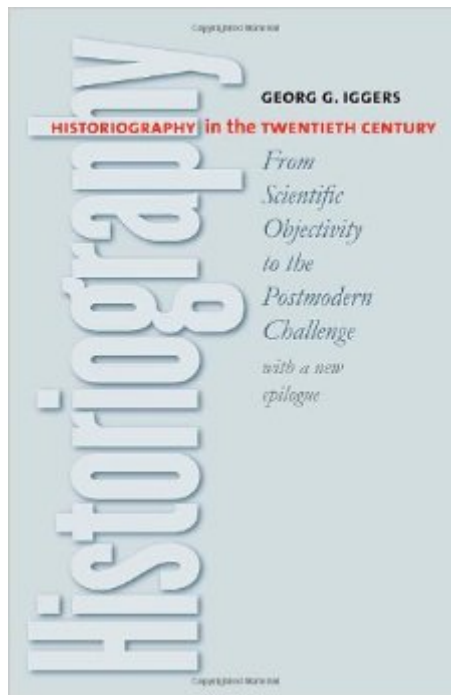


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Historiography In The Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity To The Postmodern Challenge



Synopsis

In this book, now published in 10 languages, a preeminent intellectual historian examines the profound changes in ideas about the nature of history and historiography. Georg G. Iggers traces the basic assumptions upon which historical research and writing have been based, and describes how the newly emerging social sciences transformed historiography following World War II. The discipline's greatest challenge may have come in the last two decades, when postmodern ideas forced a reevaluation of the relationship of historians to their subject and questioned the very possibility of objective history. Iggers sees the contemporary discipline as a hybrid, moving away from a classical, macrohistorical approach toward microhistory, cultural history, and the history of everyday life. The new epilogue, by the author, examines the movement away from postmodernism towards new social science approaches that give greater attention to cultural factors and to the problems of globalization.

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Customer Reviews

One of the great revelations I had in college many, many years ago occurred in the stacks of the library. I was doing some research on Wilhelm Dilthey and found myself looking at several thousands of books devoted to the history of philosophy. At that moment I began to have some idea on how difficult it is to acquire a magisterial overview of any field of inquiry. It takes a lifetime of study and the mastery of several languages to develop have such an overview. And sadly, that knowledge sometimes gets pored into a book that relatively few people ever read. This book by Georg Iggers represents that level of learning. Iggers specializes in German intellectual history but

has read deeply in the historical work done in Italy, France, England and the U.S. of A. as well. What he is trying to do in the brief book (147 pages of text, 23 pages of footnotes) is to give an overview of the most influential approaches to history of the last century. His work is divided three main parts. The first section covers the latter part of the 19th century and the early 20th. This period is dominated by the influence of Ranke and his ideas. Iggers also discusses the influence of Weber, Troeltsch, Meinecke, Karl Lambrecht, Parrington, Beard, Becker and many others that were involved in these early disputes. Obviously, Iggers can only cover a few of these people in any sort of depth but he seems to have a gift for summarizing the main point of a debate in a few lines. One note of caution: with any such survey, I cannot help but wonder how accurately the author is expressing the views of those s/he is writing about. Iggers interprets Dilthey in a way that I disagree with but which is common enough.

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